

# MADISON COUNTY

## Honorable Susan T. Moquin

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## PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adequate funding for social service programs (various)
2. Substance Abuse Prevention
3. Sustainability for existing programs

# Issues

*Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county.*

## **Health - Children's (0 - 19)**

physical and mental well-being in the county.

### **Unmet needs of mental health and substance abuse services**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- continue to work to address the High unmet need for these services

### **Lack of funding for substance abuse treatment for teens and delinquents**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- identify funding to operate the existing facility in the county

### **Public health funding has been significantly cut**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- involve public health officials more actively in the local CPC
- update CPC members on current status of public health funding

## **Safety - Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.**

### **Child death rate is too high**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- the council will ask the child death team to present a briefing for the membership on causes of unexpected child death
- continue to support local initiatives to increase the use of child safety restraints, including legal requirements, education about injury prevention and training on installation
- increase prevention efforts directed toward substance abuse by young children 8-12 years old

### **Improve services to behaviorally challenged youth**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- develop re-integration/step down services for children leaving more restrictive settings
- support local community based initiatives to serve pre-delinquent youth with structured programs such as day reporting, year round school, weekend interventions

### **Continue to support and expand prevention programming to all children**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- support school-based programs such as gang intervention and violence education (G.I.V.E.), violence prevention curricula, and bullying prevention programs
- continue to solicit opportunities to develop new programs designed to offer support and services to children and families

## **Education - Children**

learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

### **Too many students are dropping out of school and not graduating from high school**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- seek to expand alternative learning opportunities such as technical education, non-traditional classroom alternative programs and school/work co-op programs
- implement full service schools to include summer programs, after school services and parenting programs
- encourage schools to promote reading, sports, and extra-curricula activities to help generate interest in staying in school

### **Lack of non-traditional programs specifically geared needs populations, such as those with mental health issues**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- continue to support initiatives, such as circle project, to place social workers, mental health staff, and other service providers in the school programs the Circle Project was expanded to serve five schools during the current academic year
- work with local providers to create additional slots in the existing programs

## **Integrate marriage and family courses into high school curricula**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- coordinate with local educators to incorporate marriage and family course (s) into the local high school curricula

## **Early Care and Education - Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.**

### **All childcare providers need to be licensed**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- support tiered reimbursement of subsidized childcare funds

### **Inadequate availability of affordable childcare that meets minimum standards**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- support increased funding for each subsidized childcare slot

### **Improve compensation and training for childcare workers**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- encourage development of training on child development and behavior management
- support the provision of training for childcare workers and parents

## **Economic Security**

- Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

### **Too many parents are underemployed**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- review the existing TANF guidelines and make recommendations regarding the establishment of a more gradual schedule for withdrawal of benefits
- support and expand available job training and job retention programs in the county
- support and expand adult education programs

### **The divorce rate in Huntsville/Madison County is high**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- investigate the possibility of re-introducing marriage and family education, as well as pregnancy prevention classes into the high school curricula
- make information regarding alternatives to divorce available prior to initiation of divorce proceedings

### **Affordable daycare and transportation are not available to all residents**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- work to raise the priority of daycare funding
- support local efforts to improve transit services
- schedule speakers to address the council on the current status of daycare funding and local public transportation plans

## **Parent Involvement and Skills**

- Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

### **Family violence rate needs improvement**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- support local family violence education programs for parents and children and seek to ensure that they include information on substance abuse, domestic violence, anger management, and child abuse
- work with local groups to revitalize the domestic violence coalition

### **Lack of parent knowledge about child development and behavior management**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- a survey of parents has been developed, administered, and analyzed by the Early childcare and education committee
- implement the plan to disseminate information gathered in the survey

### **Promote and fund county-wide pre-marital counseling**

Policy Council Action Steps:

- coordinate with local educators to incorporate marriage and family course(s) into the local high school curricula
  - support local initiatives, such as the marriage coalition, that are designed to address the issue
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## Policy Recommendation

1. Increase license fees and penalties for alcohol and drug offense
2. Re-activate the Juvenile Community Placement and Supervision program previously operated by the Alabama Department of Youth Services
3. Place daycare funding at a higher funding priority
4. Revise existing TANF guidelines to establish a more gradual withdrawal of benefits
5. Establish tiered reimbursement of subsidized childcare funds
6. Increase funding for each subsidized childcare slot
7. Restore funding for public health
8. Increase funding for mental health, substance abuse and mental retardation services
9. Provide state seed funding for the development of local programs to meet identified needs
10. Fund re-integration and aftercare funding for youth leaving more restrictive settings

## Accomplishments

1. Completion of Parent Survey with local childcare centers- A grant from the Alabama Partnership for Children was received in late 2003. It was used to develop and administer a survey to parents with children at childcare centers. The primary research questions focused on parental understanding of child development, disciplinary measures, parenting resources utilized by parents and cost of childcare. Final results will be disseminated this year.
2. Continuation of Early Learning Opportunities grant- A Federal ELOA grant was received in 2003 and the administration of that grant continued. The National Children's Advocacy Center administers the program on behalf of the Council. The program, called Building Blocks, provides Parents as Teachers parent educators, refers clients to local parenting resources, promotes community education regarding child development, parents in the home and marriage/family counseling at a local counseling center, hosts family group meetings and refers children for development screenings at United Cerebral Palsy. Services for the current grant will continue through September 29, 2005.
3. Letters of support have been given to 16 organizations seeking grant funding- Persons or organizations seeking Council support must complete a two-page form outlining their proposed project and their local collaborative partners. A letter of support is provided if the proposed project addresses a need identified in the most recent CPC Needs Assessment document and if the proposal does not duplicate existing services.
4. Meetings of the Council have been held quarterly- Quarterly meetings are held to share information, update the membership on the status of various community initiatives, network with new members of the Policy Council community, give progress reports on grants and projects, report on committee activities, brainstorm about local challenges, and annually, to work on the County Needs Assessment. The meetings are attended by mandated members and appointed members, as well as citizens and professionals who are not members, but want to be involved.